



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Text4baby program helps pregnant women and new mothers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Amber spends much of her free time texting her friends and family and always seems to have her cell phone in hand. Now that the 25-year-old is pregnant she enjoys receiving free text messages that remind her about steps she can follow to have a healthier baby. Her friend Jessica, a busy mother of three, also appreciates receiving a text message as she waits in the car pool line at school. The text reminds her that her 6-month-old son needs an immunization.

Through a new service provided through a public-private partnership with mobile phone companies, tips about nutrition, immunization and prevention of birth defects are being sent directly by text messages to the cell phones of pregnant women and new mothers who request the free mobile information service.

Premature births often result in infant deaths and disabilities. Text4baby is a health education program which provides timely and expert advice at no charge. Studies have shown that text messaging is an effective way to reach young women.

Pregnant women and new moms who text "BABY" (or "BEBE" for Spanish) to 511411 will receive weekly text messages, timed to their due date or their baby's birth date through the baby's first year. The messages have been developed by government and nonprofit health experts such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the March of Dimes and are supported by partners in the private sector who have waived fees for this important service.

"We are pleased to partner with the text4baby initiative to give pregnant women and new mothers critical information they need so they can take charge of their health and the health of their babies," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer.

Infant mortality is an indicator used to describe the health status of communities and states. The United States has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the industrialized world. Each year in the U.S. more than 500,000 babies are born prematurely and an estimated 28,000 children die before their first birthday. A total of 513 infants died in Alabama in their first year of life in 2009.

The Alabama Department of Public Health is participating in the text4baby campaign, and aims to reach 60,000 pregnant women and new mothers throughout the state this year.

For more information about this service to promote maternal and child health, go to www.text4baby.org.

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